

OVERVIEW OF UTAH'S MONITORING SYSTEM

The Utah State Office of Education, Special Education Services (USOE-SES) has the responsibility of monitoring compliance with federal and state requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA). This responsibility is administered within the framework of supporting positive results for students with disabilities.

USOE-SES's continuous improvement monitoring system reflects the federal intent to emphasize a data-driven, systemic approach to compliance and improvement of results for children with disabilities. Previous UPIPS implementation has been generally effective in assisting LEAs in maintaining procedural compliance with federal and state regulations, but has also resulted in increased LEA commitment to the monitoring process, as well as more involvement in implementing corrective action plans and ownership in results.

The 2007 revision of UPIPS provides for a focus on LEA performance on USOE Annual Performance Report (APR) indicators, as well as additional levels of SEA support for LEAs with continuing uncorrected compliance issues which have not been corrected in one year, creating a process that is differentiated by results. This differentiation will include the level of monitoring by the SEA, according to the LEA's performance in a variety of pre-identified areas and indicators. Methods and procedures used to implement the Utah Program Improvement Planning System are consistent, but flexible, in order to adapt to the individual needs of students, educational settings, and administrative realities.

While continuing the monitoring of IDEA compliance, renewed focus is on the systematic evaluation of the impact of special education services on student achievement. Thus, this model has shifted from the previous emphasis of episodic procedural monitoring to one of active strategic planning and continuous improvement within the framework of compliance.

Objectives of the Continuous Improvement Monitoring System

The monitoring system has five major objectives:

- Ensure a meaningful and continuous process that focuses on improving academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities by linking APR data to improvement efforts.
- Ensure compliance with IDEA federal regulations and Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules.
- Connect LEA-level and school-level improvement efforts with IDEA requirements.
- Support each school district and charter school in the process of self-assessment, evaluation, and improvement of compliance and program effectiveness.
- Link program improvement activities with professional development planning.

Monitoring Process Themes

The overall system is based on the following underlying principles or themes.

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- **Continuity.** An effective accountability system is continuous rather than episodic, is linked to systemic change, and integrates self-assessment with continuous feedback and response.
- **Partnership with stakeholders.** The LEA works in partnership with diverse stakeholders. This collaboration impacts the following areas: the collection and analysis of self-assessment data; the identification of critical issues and solutions to problems; and the development, implementation, and oversight of improvement strategies to ensure compliance and improved results for students with disabilities.
- **LEA accountability.** LEAs are accountable for identifying strengths and areas of concern based upon data analysis; identifying, implementing and revising strategies for program improvement; and submitting annual measurement and progress reports.
- **Self-assessment.** Each LEA works with stakeholders to design and implement a self-assessment process that focuses on improving results for students with disabilities.
- **Data-driven process.** The improvement process in each LEA is driven by data that focuses on improved results for students with disabilities. Each LEA collects and uses data on an ongoing basis, aligned with both the SEA's and the LEA's performance goals and indicators. Data that are available and can be critical to the self-assessment process including personnel needs, graduation and dropout rates, performance of students with disabilities on state- and district-wide assessments, rates at which children with disabilities are suspended and/or expelled from school, and rates of identification and placement of students from minority backgrounds.
- **Technical assistance.** Because the focus of the monitoring process is on continuous improvement, technical assistance is a critical component of the process. Key components of technical assistance are the identification and dissemination of promising practices and professional development. LEAs are encouraged to include these components as part of their improvement plan.

Utah's Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)

Utah's continuous improvement monitoring system is called UPIPS. The system is based on the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) delineation of important program areas for special education in SEAs and LEAs. Each program area has goals specified as desired results for students with disabilities.

○ I. General Supervision

- Goal 1-Free Appropriate Public Education is available to all children in the LEA because the SEA and LEA monitoring system and other mechanisms for ensuring compliance and parent and child protections are systematic and utilize data to develop Corrective Action Plans and activities (APR Indicators 15-20).

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- Goal 2-All members of the IEP team have timely access to professional development and support activities that facilitate improved educational results for students with disabilities and the implementation of IDEA.
- Goal 3-The needs of students with disabilities are determined based upon state definitions, eligibility criteria, and appropriate evaluation procedures (APR Indicator 11).
- **II. Parent Involvement**
 - Goal 4-Parents and eligible youth with disabilities are aware of and have access to their rights and responsibilities within the system for parent and child protections.
 - Goal 5-Programs and services for students with disabilities improve because parents are actively involved in program improvement activities (APR Indicator 8).
- **III. Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment**
 - Goal 6-All students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment that promotes a high quality education and prepares them for post-school employment and independent living (APR Indicators 1-2, 5-7).
 - Goal 7-Students with disabilities are making continuous progress within the SEA and LEA system for educational accountability (U-PASS) (APR Indicator 3).
- **IV. Transitions**
 - Goal 8-Children exiting Part C have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthday, when appropriate (APR Indicator 12).
 - Goal 9-All students with disabilities, beginning at age 16, or earlier if appropriate, receive individualized, coordinated transition services, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities (APR Indicators 13-14).
- **V. Disproportionality**
 - Goal 10- Students are identified as eligible under IDEA, following SEA and LEA policies and procedures that ensure those from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds are not over identified (APR Indicators 9-10).

The Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) operates on a five-year cycle that is based on the concept that monitoring is an ongoing process. A select group of LEAs will enter into Round 2-Year 1 each calendar year. Activities for each year will be determined based upon LEA and SEA data needs.

Round 2--Year 1

Step 1: Pre-Planning

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Identify the LEAs that will participate in Round 2-Year 1 activities.
- Train the LEA staff on the SEA's monitoring system, UPIPS.
- Send a letter of explanation to the District Superintendent or Charter School Director/Principal.
- Prepare an LEA Data Profile that includes a summary of previous CAPs and submitted results.
- Provide materials for training the Stakeholder Steering Committee on its role in the process.
- Present interview outlines.
- Provide a format and example of the Program Improvement Plan and Corrective Action Plan for noncompliance items.
- Offer file review software and a hard copy file review checklist.
- Collect and analyze off-site data from each LEA.
- Provide predetermined fiscal support for LEA self-assessment activities. (The amount of fiscal support is based upon LEA enrollment of students with disabilities.)

The LEA Special Education Director has the responsibility to:

- Receive UPIPS training and materials from the USOE.
- Collect and analyze off-site data, relating it to the five program areas.
- Submit off-site data to the USOE-SES Monitoring Specialist.
- Coordinate with the SEA to determine need for mandatory CSPD activities based on LEA profile and compliance history, and establish a training schedule.
- Convene the Stakeholder Steering Committee and develop agendas for meetings.
- Set dates for Stakeholder Steering Committee meetings.
- Establish timelines for the Self-Assessment process.
- Allocate resources for Self-Assessment and Program Improvement Planning.

Step 2: Organizing Data Collection Activities

The LEA Special Education Director has the responsibility to:

- Conduct the training meeting of the Stakeholder Steering Committee.
- Review LEA Data Profile provided by the USOE and collect additional data, as needed.
- Facilitate review of program areas, goals, and performance indicators.
- Establish subcommittees and define assignments for collection and analysis of data from various sources.
- Determine the process and dates for file review, interviews, and other data collection.

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- Facilitate subsequent meetings to review and analyze data and findings.

Step 3: Conducting On-Site Data Collection

The LEA Special Education Director and assigned subcommittees have the responsibility to:

- Compile and analyze student outcome data, including LRE, disproportionality, highly qualified staff, academic achievement, graduation and dropout rates, suspension and expulsion rates, LRBI, classification, prevalence, and other sources.
- Notify schools and staff who have been selected for file review and interviews.
- Send out surveys, conduct file reviews, and hold interviews and focus groups, summarizing resulting data.
- Facilitate the analysis and compilation of collected data, relating it to the five program areas.
- Present findings and analysis to the Stakeholder Steering Committee for review.
- Provide leadership to the Stakeholder Steering Committee in establishing Program Improvement Goals that address issues identified in the data sources listed above for a five year time period.
- Report any areas of non-compliance and suggest corrective actions.

Step 4: Creating the Self-Assessment Report

The LEA Special Education Director will:

- Prepare the Self-Assessment Report including all of the following required elements:
 - LEA profile
 - Description of the purpose and process of the Self-Assessment
 - Explanation of stakeholder involvement, including membership and activities of the Steering Committee
 - Summary of all data collected during the Self-Assessment process
 - Results of the Self-Assessment data analysis related to the ten goals in the five Program Areas
 - Evidence of mandatory professional development, including attendance and agendas, as well as evidence of follow-up requirements
 - List of strengths or exemplary practices of the special education program
 - List of areas of noncompliance
 - List of areas of recommendations for program improvement of the special education program
 - An Executive Summary
 - A Special Education Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that contains activities to be implemented over a five year period
 - A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for areas of non-compliance that contains activities intended to correct all noncompliance within one year

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Step 5: Submission of Data to the USOE-SES

The LEA Special Education Director will:

- Submit required state and federal data reports and LEA application.
- The Self-Assessment Report to the USOE-SES Monitoring Specialist.
- The reimbursement request for UPIPS fiscal support to the State Director of Special Education.

The USOE-SES Technical Assistant to the LEA and/or the Monitoring Specialist are available to assist with any of the processes and activities described above. Please call the Monitoring Secretary at (801) 538-7936 if they may be of help.

Round 2-Year 2

Step 1: Implement PIP and CAP

The LEA special education director will:

- Initiate implementation of the LEA's Program Improvement Plan.
- Carry out Corrective Action Plan activities contained in Self-Assessment Report.
- Correct file errors identified during the self-assessment process.
- USOE-SES staff is available to assist the director as necessary.

Step 2: Determine Type of Validation Needed

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Review the LEA Self-Assessment Plan content.
- Review the previous UPIPS history of LEA (timelines of corrections, identification of compliance errors, etc.).
- Perform a desk audit to determine if data submissions to SEA include all required data, data analyses, and proposed plan and evidence of corrections/improvement are adequate to meet the requirements of UPIPS and the SEA Annual Performance Report (APR).
- Determine if the LEA will be scheduled for an on-site visit to validate self-assessment findings (required for LEAs who have not been through the UPIPS process previously) or gather missing/additional data. (If an on-site visit is NOT required, please skip to Step 5: Implement Plans.)

Step 3: Plan Validation Visit (If Required)

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Identify LEA schools, teachers, and types of files for review.
- Collaborate with LEA in setting up schedule and details of on-site validation visit.

The LEA special education director will:

- Collaborate with USOE-SES staff in setting up the on-site validation visit.
- Provide required information to monitoring specialist.
- Inform staff of schedule and requirements during on-site visit.

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Step 3: Conduct Visit (If Required)

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Conduct the on-site visit to the LEA in order to validate the self-assessment findings and/or gather missing data.

Step 4: UPIPS Report

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Submit a UPIPS Final Report of validation visit findings to the LEA, including strengths, areas of systemic noncompliance, individual file reports, and recommendations for program improvement.
- Share UPIPS final report with the public.

The LEA special education director and Stakeholder Steering Committee will:

- Share final UPIPS report with LEA School Board and Public.
- Submit evidence of sharing with public to SEA.
- Revise the Special Education Program Improvement Plan, as appropriate, to reflect additional findings after the SEA site visit and report.
- Submit Corrective Action Plans for any additional areas of noncompliance from the USOE UPIPS Final Report.
- Plan professional development activities to facilitate PIP and CAP.
- Begin file correction activities for individual file errors identified through SEA on-site visit.

Step 5: Implement Plans

The LEA special education director will:

- Continue to implement the Program Improvement Plan and Corrective Action Plan with revisions based on UPIPS Report.
- Begin individual and systemic file error correction procedures.
- Begin collection of data showing correction of all identified areas of noncompliance.

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Track corrections of noncompliance as evidence is submitted and respond in writing to the LEA.
- Share UPIPS LEA Self-Assessment Report with the public (if an on-site visit is NOT required).

Step 6: Submission of Data to the USOE-SES

The LEA Special Education Director will:

- Submit evidence of correction of all noncompliance identified in the Year 1 Self-Assessment Report.
- Submit a progress report on the Program Improvement Plan activities, along with supporting evidence of completion.
- Submit required state and federal data reports and LEA application.

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Track corrections of noncompliance as evidence is submitted and respond in writing to the LEA on the progress.
- Track progress on Program Improvement Plans and respond in writing to the LEA.

Round 2-Year 3

The LEA special education director will:

- Continue to implement its Program Improvement Plan.
- Continue to implement Corrective Action Plan activities, unless they were completed during Year 2.
- Implement planned professional development activities.
- Collect and review data to measure the effectiveness of the action steps for each Program Improvement goal.
- Revise the Program Improvement Plan based on continuous self-assessment.
- Submit evidence from internal file reviews to verify results of Corrective Action Plan implementation, unless corrected during Year 2.
- Complete correction of individual file errors identified through SEA on-site visit, if applicable.
- Submit evidence of individual file error correction identified through SEA on-site visit to the USOE, if applicable.
- Submit a progress report on the Program Improvement Plan activities, along with supporting evidence of completion.
- Submit required state and federal data reports and LEA application.

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Provide technical assistance as needed.
- Review evidence of file error correction submitted by LEA.
- Review Corrective Action Plan implementation results.
- Track corrections of noncompliance as evidence is submitted and respond in writing to the LEA.
- Review annual progress reports on Program Improvement Plan.
- Conduct follow-up on-site visits if verification of results data are not submitted by deadlines.

Round 2-Year 4

Step 1: Continue to Implement PIP and CAP

The LEA special education director will:

- Continue to implement its Program Improvement Plan.
- Continue to implement Corrective Action Plan activities, if applicable.
- Collect and review data to measure the effectiveness of the action steps for each goal.
- USOE-SES staff is available to assist the director as necessary.

Step 2: Determine if On-Site Visit is Needed

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Review previous UPIPS history of LEA (timelines of corrections, identification of compliance errors, etc.).
- Perform a desk audit to determine if data submissions to SEA include all required data, data analyses, and proposed plan and evidence of corrections/improvement are adequate to meet the requirements of UPIPS and the SEA Annual Performance Report (APR).
- Determine if the LEA will be scheduled for an on-site visit to gather missing/additional data. (If an on-site visit is NOT required, please skip to Step 5: Implement Plans.)

Step 3: Plan Focused Visit

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Identify files and type of review based on LEA submitted Corrective Action Plan results.
- Collaborate with LEA in setting up schedule and details of on-site focused visit.

The LEA special education director will:

- Collaborate with USOE-SES staff in setting up the on-site focused visit.
- Provide required information to monitoring specialist.
- Inform staff (if needed) of schedule and requirements during on-site visit.

Step 4: Conduct Visit

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Conduct the on-site focused visit to the LEA in order to validate the Corrective Action Plan goals and results.

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- Ensure that required Corrective Action Plans are submitted by the LEA.

Step 5: UPIPS Report

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Submit a UPIPS Final Report of on-site focused visit findings to the LEA.

The LEA special education director and Stakeholder Steering Committee will:

- Share the final UPIPS report with local School Board and Public.
- Submit method of sharing with public to SEA.
- Revise the Special Education Program Improvement Plan as appropriate; to reflect additional findings after the SEA on-site focused visit and report.
- Revise the Corrective Action Plan, as appropriate; to reflect additional findings after the SEA on-site focused visit and report.
- Plan/continue to implement professional development activities to facilitate PIP and CAP.
- Begin file correction activities for individual file errors identified through SEA on-site focused visit.

Step 6: Implement Plans

The LEA special education director will:

- Continue to implement the Program Improvement Plan (and Corrective Action Plan with revisions based on UPIPS Report, if applicable).
- Begin individual and systemic file error correction procedures, if applicable.
- Begin collection of data showing correction of all identified areas of noncompliance.
- Submit annual progress reports on Program Improvement Plan (and Corrective Action Plan, if applicable) to the USOE.
- Submit required state and federal data reports and LEA application.

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Provide technical assistance as needed.
- Review evidence of file error correction submitted by the LEA.
- Review the revised Corrective Action Plan.
- Track corrections of noncompliance as evidence is submitted and respond in writing to the LEA.
- Review revised Program Improvement Plan.
- Review annual progress reports on Corrective Action Plan and Program Improvement Plan and respond in writing to the LEA.

Round 2-Year 5

The LEA special education director will:

- Continue to implement its Program Improvement Plan.
- Complete Corrective Action Plan activities, if applicable.
- Collect and review data to measure the effectiveness of the action steps for each goal.
- Coordinate with SEA to determine possible need for mandatory CSPD activities based on LEA profile and compliance history, and establish training schedule.
- Revise the Program Improvement Plan based on continuous self-assessment.
- Complete corrections of individual file errors identified through SEA on-site focused visit.
- Submit evidence of individual file error correction to the USOE.
- Submit annual progress reports on the Corrective Action Plan and the Program Improvement Plan to the USOE.
- Submit required state and federal data reports and LEA application.

The USOE-SES staff will:

- Provide technical assistance as needed.
- Review evidence of file error correction and respond in writing to the LEA.
- Review annual progress reports on Corrective Action Plan and Program Improvement Plan and respond in writing to the LEA.